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Russia Develops Coronavirus Contact-Tracing App

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Russia has the world's fifth-highest number of confirmed Covid-19 cases at 1.97 million. **Vladimir Gerdo / TASS**

Russia has developed a smartphone app that alerts users of possible exposure to the coronavirus, the country's Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media has said.

The app, with the working title "Stopcoronavirus. My Contacts," scans the user's surroundings in a 10-meter radius and measures how close and for how long they interact with other users. Users who become infected will voluntarily notify the app, which then sends alerts to all others who were in close proximity to them.

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A video released by the ministry stresses that all contacts will be stored anonymously on each device and will be automatically deleted after 14 days, the maximum incubation period for

Covid-19.

“The information is anonymous and the infected person’s identity is not revealed,” explains the ministry’s video, which has since been taken down from YouTube.

The ministry said it has partnered with Moscow City Hall as well as Apple and Google to develop the contact-tracing app. The tech giants this spring collaborated to develop Exposure Notifications, a contact-tracing system based on Bluetooth technology that has been adopted by public health authorities in dozens of countries.

The Meduza news website reported, citing unnamed sources, that the Russian app is based on Exposure Notifications.

Digital Development Minister Maksut Shadayev confirmed the app’s development, telling Meduza that its installation will not be required. “It’s a voluntary matter, but the more users install it, the wider the coverage,” Shadayev said.

Neither Shadayev nor Meduza indicated how soon the contact-tracing app is expected to hit the App Store and Google Play.

Russia has the world’s fifth-highest number of confirmed Covid-19 cases at 1.97 million, with record-breaking new deaths and infections in recent weeks. Brazil, another top-5 country, also uses Exposure Notifications, as do 22 U.S. states.

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